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FOLK-LORE COLLECTED IN TORONTO AND VICINITY.

BY W. J. WINTEMBERG.

THE following collection of folk-lore material is not the result of a systematic effort. It was made as occasion offered during the period extending from 1898 to 1911. Except where otherwise stated, all the data were obtained from people of British extraction, most of the purely English material being communicated by J. K. Matthews (JKM) and Frances and Minnie Matthews (FM and MM). Two extracts from local newspapers are also included.

PLANT-LORE.

1. Sweet-clover drives away flies or kills them. (FM.)
2. The effects of poison ivy will be felt for seven years. (FM.)
3. There is a plant we call "the devil-flower." If you touch it, you will go to the devil. (FM.)
4. There is a blue flower we call the "wild stock." If you touch it, you will be poisoned. (FM.)
5. An Irish woman (Westmoreland Street, Toronto) believes that "snake-cactus" brings bad luck. (FM.)

ANIMAL-LORE.

6. Grandfather, grandfather Graveyard,
Tell me where the cows are, or I'll kill you.

This is said to the "daddy-long-legs" spider. (John Day, Comber, Essex County, Ontario.)

7. Grasshopper, grasshopper,
Give me some "bacca,"
And then I'll let you go.

This is said to grasshoppers. (FM.)

8. Hunters, in York County, believe that if they miss the first rabbit, they will have no luck all day. (E. R. Boniface.)

9. It is unlucky to buy a horse with three white feet or legs. I heard of a man going all the way from Toronto to Napanee, in 1903, to buy

a fine team of horses, but who refused to take them because one of them had three white feet. (J. Deans.)

WEATHER-LORE.

10. Winter thunder is a sign of more cold weather.
11. "To turn a tub upside down will bring thunder." (Said by a woman on Westmoreland Street, Toronto. — FM.)
12. When cats or dogs eat grass, it forecasts a storm.
13. When pigs run about with straw in their mouths, it indicates a coming storm. (E. R. Boniface.)
14. When the snow disappears by the sun's aid alone, thunderstorms are frequent during the summer.
15. When earthworms appear about the ground in large numbers, one may expect a shower. (Told by an old farmer attending the Toronto Exhibition, in 1898.)
16. The same man told me that when cranes (blue herons) fly northward, rain is to be expected.
17. The crying of the night-hawk (*Chordeiles virginianus* Gmel.) is a sign of warm weather.

LORE ABOUT THE HUMAN BODY.

18. If your nose itches, you will kiss a fool.
19. If your nose itches before breakfast, you will see some one before dinner; if before dinner, you will see some one before supper; if before supper, you will see some one before bed-time. (FM.)
20. Left-handed people do not get consumption.
21. Itching hands betoken a visitor with whom you will shake hands.
22. If your right foot itches, you are wanted and are welcome somewhere. If your left foot itches, you are not welcome. (FM.)

BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD.

23. A child with the incisor teeth far apart will become rich.
24. To rock an empty cradle is a sign of sickness (to the baby?).

FOLK-MEDICINE.

Cures for Various Diseases.

25. An infusion of yarrow-leaves is good for a cold. (FM.)
26. Smoking dried mullein-leaves is recommended as a cure for catarrh. (FM.)
27. A tea made from leaves of the black currant is good for diarrhœa. (JKM.)
28. A man formerly living in Brant County, Ontario, stated that when one was bitten by a pig as it was being killed, grease should be put on the pig's teeth to keep the wound from becoming sore.

29. The same informant spoke of a family living in the same county who believed that by wearing a string of beads around the neck one was kept free of disease. The kind and color of beads was not specified.

Rheumatism-Cures.

30. Horse-radish will cure rheumatism. (MM.)

31. A poultice made of cow-excrement will also cure it. (MM.)

Wart-Cures.

32. The milk of milkweed will cure warts. (MM.)

33. Rub a raw piece of fat on a wart, and it will also disappear.¹ (MM.)

34. Rub raw meat on the warts and throw it away. Then you will have no more warts. (MM.)

35. Take a black snail and rub it on the wart. Then throw the snail in a hedge. Same result.² (FM.)

36. Another way of getting rid of warts is to let a grasshopper bite them. (FM.)

LOVE, COURTSHIP, AND MARRIAGE.

37. When your apron-strings come undone, it is a sign that your lover is thinking of you. (FM.)

38. If you find a hairpin and put it in your right shoe, the first man you shake hands with will be your husband. (FM.)

39. "Church weddings were almost unheard of, . . . and most happy pairs were united in the best room of the bride's parents, — wedding-trips are a modern nuptial feature, — and the young couple usually settled down under the roof of the bride's father until they were able to make a home of their own. One of the old-time marriage customs, which has not survived, is that of throwing a stocking from the bridal chamber into the crowd of young friends gathered beneath the window, with the same significance as the present casting of the bride's bouquet; namely, that the lucky one who [catches] it [will] be the first of the band to be caught in the matrimonial net." (In Eglinton, north of Toronto. *The Globe*, Toronto, June 23, 1911.)

40. To sit on a table is a sign that the person doing so wishes to be married that year. Another variant has it that it is a sign that one will not marry during that year.

GUY FAWKES' DAY.

41. Up to within ten years ago children in Earls court, a suburb of Toronto, celebrated Guy Fawkes' Day. They lighted bonfires and marched through the streets, some of them carrying pumpkin lanterns (with eyes, nose, and mouth cut through the sides to represent a

¹ Compare JAFL 7 : 227.

² *Ibid.*; and Addy, *Household Tales and Traditional Remains*, p. 89.

human face). Others carried torches made of bulrushes which had been dipped in kerosene. The following rhyme was sung or chanted:—

Remember, remember, the fifth of November,
 When Gunpowder treason, and plot;
 There is no reason why Gunpowder treason
 Should ever be forgot.
 Stick and a stake,
 For Queen Victoria's sake!
 Pray, dame, won't you give me a fagot?
 If you won't give me one, I'll take two;
 That's the way the other boys do.
 A loaf of bread to feed old Polk;
 A penn'orth of cheese to choke him;
 A bottle of wine to make him drunk;
 And a good old fagot to burn him,
 To burn his body from his head.
 Then we'll cry old Polk is dead.
 Hurrah!¹ (FM.)

LORE ABOUT ADORNMENT AND ARTICLES OF DRESS.

- 42 If you lose a hairpin, some one wants you. (FM.)
 43. If you find a button, it is a sure sign of good luck. (FM.)
 44. If you find a button and keep it, it is a sure sign of good luck.
 (FM.)

HOUSEHOLD-LORE.

45. It is a sign of disappointment to sing at the table.
 46. To upset a chair means a disappointment. (From a waitress
 in a restaurant.)
 47. It is said that one will be sure to break three dishes in succession.
 48. Crushing egg-shells in the hand will give one warts. (FM.)
 49. Card-players sometimes get up and walk around their chair to
 change their luck.

MISCELLANEOUS LORE.

50. An acquaintance says that to dream of muddy water is to him a
 warning of trouble. (W. Collins.)
 51. It is unlucky to present any one with a pointed or edged tool,
 such as a knife. The recipient should give a cent for it to prevent the
 impending ill luck.
 52. I have seen children wet their left palm with the index-finger,
 and then strike the wet spot with their fist. This was done three times
 for good luck. Some also make a cross on the palm with the wet
 finger. They do this for every wedding-ring they see; others do so for
 every white horse, and when they have "marked" a hundred horses
 in this way, they believe that they will be lucky and find something.

¹ Compare FL 14 : 90-91, 175-176; 24 : 85; also Notes and Queries, 10 S., X (1908):
 384, 433-434.

53. A woman of Irish extraction, Mrs. Meader, believes in fore-warnings. The harbinger of illness in the family is a strange dog which comes to her house. One time she woke up in the middle of the night after hearing several (three, I think) distinct knocks at the door. She roused her husband, who found no one in sight, and no tracks in the snow to indicate that any one had been there. A few days later they heard of the death of her cousin.

PROVERBS, SAYINGS, AND EXPRESSIONS.

54. "The old woman is plucking her geese," is said when it snows. (MM.)

55. "One breed of pups keeps as clean as another;" i.e., one person is as good as another. (J. Robinson.)

56. "To look like a stewed owl." (JKM.)

57. "How's the state of your segatiation?" jocularly. (JKM.)

FAIRY-LORE.

58. In response to my query, "Do you believe in fairies, Robert?" an Irishman from Kilkenny, living in Toronto, told me of a man near Kilkenny who built a stone wall across the front of his place, and in so doing unwittingly blocked a road or path used by the "little people," thus incurring their resentment. Although they could have used a gate at each end of the wall, the fairies promptly tore down the wall. The man rebuilt it, and it was torn down again; so he let the fairies have their way. Robert firmly believed this, because he had seen the place, and seeing is believing.¹

GHOST-LORE.

*The Mass of the Ghost.*²

59. About this tale of the spook: One evening a man who was in the church, praying, fell asleep. When he awoke, it was midnight. A priest was on the altar, and the church was all lighted up. He asked if there was any one to answer mass. The man did not answer. The lights went out; all was darkness.

The following day this man went to the priest of the parish and related his experience of the night before. The priest decided to go the next night, so that, if the dead priest appeared, he might answer, "Yes!" when the question was put. The spirit came as usual, and

¹ Compare "John Cokeley and the Fairy" (Jeremiah Curtin, *Tales of the Fairies* London, 1895).

² Compare an Irish story in *Folk-Lore*, 15 : 338; and French-Canadian and Breton versions given by Louis Fr chet te in his "French-Canadian Folk-Lore" (*The Canadian Magazine* [Toronto, 1908], 30 : 215-216).

the parish priest answered, "Yes!" He went to the front of the church and answered mass. When it was over, the spirit shook hands with him. The priest, who had rolled a handkerchief around his hand, found it burnt.¹ The departed priest had told him that this was a mass he should have said when he was on this earth. (Communicated to Mr. D. E. Jackson, formerly of Toronto, in a letter by a friend living in Victoria County, Ontario.)

AMUSEMENTS.

60. THE CROW'S NEST. — I remember seeing a small boy laying the two first fingers of one hand across the same fingers of the other, and saying, —

"Stick your finger in the crow's nest,
The crow is not at home;
The crow is at the back door,
Picking at a bone."

If you put your finger into the opening, he pinched it, crying, —

"The crow's at home."

61. DO YOU WANT TO SEE LONDON? — I once heard the father of the same boy ask a child, "Do you want to see London?"² at the same time lifting her up by placing his hands to the side of her head.

62. BINGO. — It is played after this fashion: One is chosen to stand in the ring, and the rest strike up the interesting ditty, —

"There was a farmer owned a dog,
Bingo was his name;
Bingo, Bingo, Bingo,
Bingo was his name."

Then the proud person in the centre, starting anywhere in the ring, counts out, "B-i-n-g-o!" and the one fortunate enough to be "o" is given the post of honor, and the game proceeds as before. (Toronto, from *The Star*, June 28, 1907.)

GAME-SONGS.

63. HERE COMES A KING ARRIVING.

Here comes a king arriving
With an ansy, tansy, tisivio,
Here comes a King arriving,
With an ansy, tansy, tee.

¹ Compare E. M. Fogel, *Beliefs and Superstitions of the Pennsylvania Germans* (Philadelphia, 1915), p. 375; and A. Wuttke, *Der deutsche Volksaberglaube der Gegenwart* (Berlin, 1900), p. 483.

² In Denmark this is called "showing them Kjøge hens." (Note to "Little Tuk," in Andersen's *Fairy Tales* [Dulcken trans.]).

"Pray, what do you want, sir, (*bis*)
With an ansy, tansy, tisivio,
With an ansy, tansy tee?" —

"I want to get married, (*bis*)
With an ansy, tansy, tisivio,
With an ansy, tansy tee."

"Take one of my fine daughters, (*bis*)
With an ansy" . . .

"They're all too black and dirty, (*bis*)
With an ansy" . . .

"They're just as clean as you, sir, (*bis*)
With an ansy" . . .

"Then, I think, I will take this one, (*bis*)
With an ansy" . . .

"And now we are married,
With an ansy, tansy, tee."

(FM.)

64. OLY, OLY, EE.

Oly, oly, ee,
As we go rolling down the hill,
So sweet and tolling,
Choose your own, your own true-lover.
See that you don't choose no other.
Down fare well!
These two people are married together;
Must obey their father and mother.
Down fare well!

(FM.)

65. KING WILLIAM WAS KING GEORGE'S SON.

King William was King George's son,
And all the royal races run.
Upon his breast he wore a star,
Which was called the sign of war.
Come, choose to the east,
Come, choose to the west,
Come, choose to the very one you love best.
If she's not there to take your part,
Come, choose the next one to your heart.
Down on this carpet you must kneel,
As sure as grass grows in the field,
And kiss your bride, and kiss your sweet.
Rise, rise upon your feet!

(FM.)

66. NUTS IN MAY.¹

"Here we come gathering nuts in May, nuts in May,
Here we come gathering nuts in May,
On a cold and frosty morning."

"Who'll you have for nuts in May, nuts in May,
Who'll you have for nuts in May,
On a cold and frosty morning?"

"We'll have N. N. for nuts in May, nuts in May,
We'll have N. N. for nuts in May,
On a cold and frosty morning."

"Who'll you have to pull him away, pull him away,
Who'll you have to pull him away,
On a cold and frosty morning?"

(FM.)

67. WE ARE ALL SO GAY..

Go round and round the valley, (*ter*)
For we are all so gay.

Go in and out the window, (*ter*)
For we are all so gay.

Turn round and face your lover, (*ter*)
For we are all so gay.

Then measure your love to show me, (*ter*)
For we are all so gay.

(FM.)

68. POOR MARY WAS A-WEeping.

Poor Mary was a-weeping, a-weeping, a-weeping,
Poor Mary was a-weeping on a bright summer's day.

"Pray! what are you weeping for, weeping for, weeping for,
On a bright summer's day?"

"I am weeping for a lover, a lover, a lover,
I am weeping for a lover on a bright summer's day."

"Then get up and choose one, and choose one, and choose one,
Pray get up and choose one, on a bright summer's day."

(FM.)

69. NURSERY RHYME.

Ninkelty, pinkelty,
Needles and pins.
When matrimony,
Then trouble begins, (*bis*)

¹ Compare C. M. Barbeau, p. 178, No. 6.

When matrimony,
Then trouble begins.
I'm ninety-five, (*bis*)
To keep single,
I'll contrive.¹

(FM.)

70. BOOK RHYME.

Hic liber est meus, and to this will I stick,
Si aliquis rapit, I'll give him a kick.

(Written in the book of an Upper-Canada College student of 1859.)

RIDDLES.

71. What goes up when the rain comes down? — An umbrella.
(MM.)

72. What goes through the bush and through the bush, yet never touches the bush? — A watch in a man's pocket. (MM.)

73. What goes through the bush and through the bush and leaves a rag on every bush? — Snow. (MM.)

74. What goes over the water and under the water, yet never touches the water? — An egg inside a duck. (MM.)

ITALIAN GOOD-LUCK AND EVIL-EYE CHARMS.

Although the belief in good luck and *jettadura*, *mal occhio*, or the evil eye, is perhaps not as prevalent among Italian residents of Toronto as in some parts of Italy, the wearing of amulets shows that their new environment has not made them discard some of their old beliefs.

I have seen horseshoes nailed to the front ends of Italian fruit-venders' push-carts. A horseshoe, of course, has always been considered a charm for good luck even with us; and with the Italians it possibly is even more so, especially on account of its resemblance to the *corni* symbol, made by extending the index and little fingers of the hand, and known as the *mano cornuta*.

Red coral, small branches of which are usually worn in Italy, is a potent protection against the evil eye. A three-pronged piece especially possessed, so it is believed, the power of keeping off evil spirits, and also of neutralizing the effect of the eye. This material is also fashioned into small *mano cornutas* or charm hands. The more superstitious Neapolitans almost constantly have their hand in this position; and whenever the influence of the *jettadura* is felt, they point their hand toward themselves, or toward the one supposed to cast the evil glance, to avert the dreaded influence. Some years ago I saw a

¹ Compare Notes and Queries, 10 S., X (1908): 457.

woman wearing an exquisitely carved specimen, which is the only one I ever saw made of coral. On another occasion I saw a woman who wore two *mano cornutas* made of metal (gold-plated brass, possibly) in the form of stick-pins. They looked like two-pronged forks.

A horn, by virtue of its shape as well as by virtue of its substance, is regarded as an excellent preservative against the evil eye, and I have seen several worn as charms by Italian women in Toronto. They were made of coral or of some composition resembling it in color.¹ I once saw a charm, curved like a cow's horn, on the breast of a baby. It was made of silver or some other white metal. Another kind of charm was seen on a child in 1911. It consisted of a metal key (possibly gold-plated brass) attached to about half a dozen metal horns which were about one and three-fourths inches long and spirally grooved like a shell or cornucopia, only they were straight. Pieces, or perhaps a bow, of narrow blue ribbon, were attached to them.

A JEWISH CUSTOM.

One day in 1904 a Jewish woman called at the house where I was boarding in Toronto, and asked for some water, which she poured over her hands. On being pressed for an explanation, she said it was customary to do so before returning home after seeing a corpse.²

¹ I have two such amulets in my collection. These were bought in a Syrian store. One of these is a closed hand made of pearl, capped at the wrist-end with metal (perhaps silver), with four metal-capped coral or composition horns suspended from it by a wire loop. Around the wrist is a metal bracelet with a blue-bead setting. The other charm consists of a small brass ring from which hang four similar horns, but without metal caps. I was told that they came from Italy and were for good luck.

² Compare Numbers, xix, 11; Potter's *Antiquities of the Greeks* (New York, 1825), p. 539; and Adams's *Roman Antiquities* (London, 1825), pp. 448-449.

GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, OTTAWA, CAN.